UNITED
NATIONS

CRC

Convention on the
Rights of the Child

Distr.
GENERAL

CRC/C/SR.746
7 November 2001

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twenty-eighth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 746th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 10 October 2001, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. DOEK

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4) (continued)

Initial report of Cape Verde (continued) (CRC/C/11/Add.23; CRC/C/Q/CAP/1; written replies of the Government of Cape Verde to the questions in the list of issues (document without a symbol, distributed in the meeting room in English only))

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Cape Verde took places at the Committee table.

2. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ asked whether a system of local councils had been established, and if so, what their precise function was in respect of the implementation of the Convention. If such councils were empowered to levy taxes, could the resources be used for such services as education or health care? Did the central Government subsidize them, and if so, was assistance provided to all councils equally or to the ones most in need? According to the delegation, single-parent families headed by women were prevalent, while men tended to have a number of families. In the family unit, if the woman had to play the dual role of mother and father, what specific role did the man play?

3. Ms. FONTES LIMA (Cape Verde) said that the information she could provide on the family structure in Cape Verdean society was empirical and anecdotal, insofar as no research had been conducted on that subject. There was a clear need for serious studies to be carried out to determine the origins and values of the family structure, and much work was needed to address the lack of responsible behaviour on the part of many Cape Verdean fathers.

4. Among children born out of wedlock, a large number were born in families constituting de facto unions. Such unions were often stable and were recognized by the Family Code. While the law provided a procedure for the legal recognition of de facto unions, such provisions were usually invoked only after the death of one of the partners, with the aim of ensuring a retroactive effect on inheritance rights. Therefore, it could be assumed that a large number of children ostensibly born out of wedlock were actually being raised in two-parent homes. One possible explanation for the prevalence of one-parent families was the fact that Cape Verde had evolved from a colonial, slavery-based society, where the place of the father had been given less importance. The emigration of many male workers could also explain the phenomenon. The effects of modern life, on the other hand, probably accounted for just a small proportion of the single-family households.

5. The distinction between "legitimate" and "illegitimate" children had not been a part of the local culture; it had been imposed by the colonial power and had been abolished from the law very soon after independence. Laws requiring women to obtain permission from their husbands to engage in commerce had been repealed at the same time. By law, men and women had had equal rights in the family since then. In addition, men were expected to provide for their families' needs, regardless of whether they were officially married. For example, even if a man had been in a de facto union, he was required to pay alimony in the event of a separation. However, some evaded such responsibilities, for example by leaving jobs in the formal sector.

6. The Government was discussing with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations the development of a specific plan of action for children. The overwhelming majority of disabled children were in mainstream schools because resources were lacking for special educational facilities. More attention must be given to assisting such children. There were plans to set up a core of specialized teachers to provide education for the disabled at the regular schools. Some 500 disabled children did not attend school, and were given educational services in the home or through community efforts, which were partially subsidized by the Government.

7. In 1996, it had been estimated that 21 per cent of children under five had not been registered. Many of those children would, however, be registered later in life, for example when they enrolled in school. The lack of registration did not have a serious effect on the vaccination rate, because the network used for planning mother and child health care and the Expanded Programme on Immunization was separate from the official population registry. A study of the reasons for failure to register children had been conducted since the drafting of the initial report; it had found that the main obstacle to registration was not the cost, which amounted to about one dollar and could be reduced in needy cases, but rather a failure on the part of fathers to recognize their children. Efforts were being made to increase registration. Whenever a child was registered as having an "unknown father", an investigation must take place to attempt to establish paternity.

8. The delegation had taken due note that the national legislation needed to be brought into line with the provisions of the Convention, in particular by prohibiting discrimination against disabled children.

9. Ms. RAMOS (Cape Verde) said that the representatives in the Children's Parliament were selected by municipal assemblies organized by secondary schools. The number of representatives for a given municipality was equal to the number of deputies in the National Assembly. The first Children's Parliament had held a session in 1999, and a follow-up session in 2000. The second Children's Parliament, held in 2001, had been devoted to the right to education, and had worked more closely with the National Assembly. Children who were not enrolled in school, including street children and those in institutions, were represented in the Children's Parliament by persons selected by the Cape Verdean Juvenile Institute (ICM). Most street children were found in Praia and on the islands of São Vicente and Sal.

10. The Children's Parliament had called for the rights of the child to be taught systematically in school, and the Ministry of Education was working on integrating the subject into the regular school curriculum at the primary and secondary levels. Efforts were under way to involve students in decision-making in schools, for example by promoting the establishment of students' associations at the primary level. In secondary schools, the students had at their own initiative organized themselves into associations. In the past two years, children had taken part in the drafting of various documents, including the report on the follow-up to the World Summit for Children. The few NGOs that included children or were active in child-related activities were always invited to take part in the drafting of such reports.

11. ICM had collected certain data relating to street children with a view to drawing up precise strategies to assist them. SOS Children's Villages (Kinderdorf International), an NGO, carried out assistance work for abandoned children, and some abandoned children were placed by the authorities in foster homes. The Government's social welfare services provided certain services for abandoned children, as did the Rotary Club. There was still progress to be made in the coordination of such efforts.

12. Children had the right to form and take part in associations. However, persons under the age of 18 did not have the legal capacity to act as adults. Their associations thus would not be officially recognized, but they were free to function, as NGOs did not require official registration or authorization to function legally in Cape Verde. A study had been conducted of violence in schools, and a programme to raise awareness among teachers was under way. A workshop had been scheduled for the end of 2001 on the problem of school violence.

13. Ms. FONTES LIMA (Cape Verde) said that town councils played a part in implementing the rights of the child, although to do so they relied almost entirely on funding from central government, which was allocated to them on the basis of demographic data. Councils provided transport to school, which was especially important for secondary-school pupils, who tended to have further to travel. Unfortunately, the pressure on resources meant that councils were having great difficulty in maintaining those transport services. Discussions were due to be held at the end of the month between representatives of the councils and the Government on ways to improve town councils' provisions for children below the age of three.

14. A nationwide support network had finally been established to provide women with advice on family planning. Children also had access to those services and to youth support centres set up by the Secretary of State for Youth and Sports, where information was provided and condoms distributed. Children, and the public at large, were generally well informed on family planning matters, but there was a gap between their knowledge and their behaviour. One of the messages the various centres were trying to convey was that abortion, which was legal during the first three months of pregnancy, should not be used as a form of contraception. In theory, as abortions were carried out by professional, non-judgemental medical staff in hospitals, there was no reason for girls to have illegal abortions and the number of illegal abortions had indeed fallen. However, some girls still chose to have an illegal abortion, perhaps because they wanted to hide their pregnancy or because they were over the three-month limit.

15. The CHAIRPERSON said he could not help being intrigued by family life in Cape Verde, where, to say the least, marriage was not very popular. It appeared that women there tended to have a series of partners, while the men often had more than one partner at the same time. His concern was that numerous reports had shown that single-parent families were especially vulnerable to problems. Given the lifestyle in Cape Verde, however, it was difficult to estimate how many of the mothers not living with the father of their child - almost half of the mothers in the country according to one report carried out with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) - formed single-parent families.

16. Ms. FONTES LIMA (Cape Verde) said that the absence of the father did not necessarily mean that children were in an unstable situation: sometimes the father was absent because he was abroad earning money to send home to support his family, or the woman's new partner took

care of the family, or the man eventually married the mother of his child. The men living in a state of "unmarried polygamy" might well be the product of a certain machismo that still existed in Cape Verde. It was clear that a study was urgently needed to establish and analyse the facts of the matter.

17. Ms. KARP asked what percentage of children were recognized by the father and how much use was made of the legislation that facilitated declarations of paternity.

18. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ asked whether domestic violence might be one of the reasons why women changed partners.

19. Ms. FONTES LIMA (Cape Verde) said she could not say whether domestic violence was a reason for changing partners, but it was certainly a serious problem and the Ministry of Justice had organized a meeting to discuss it with various experts and NGOs only two months earlier. There was something of a wall of silence on the subject, which the Government realized must be broken down. To encourage victims to report cases of domestic violence, it was considering introducing telephone hotlines and setting up special police units, which would include female officers, to handle such cases. There was also a need to introduce schemes to treat the victims and rehabilitate the aggressors.

20. In reply to a question by Ms. Karp, she said that most fathers recognized their children even if they were not married to the mother. They were not penalized for doing so, and there was no social pressure on them to avoid doing so.

21. The CHAIRPERSON referred to reports claiming that domestic violence and sexual abuse against children were far more widespread than indicated by the figures available. Apart from the fact that some injuries resulting from domestic violence would be reported as the results of "accidents", it appeared likely that the number of cases recorded by hospitals represented merely the tip of the iceberg. Moreover, a 1998 ethnographic study by the Ministry of Education had concluded that violence was widespread in schools. He would like to know more about society's attitude to violence and what the Government was intending to do to address the problem in a systematic manner.

22. Ms. KARP welcomed the indications that the Government realized how urgent it was to take measures to curb domestic violence. She wondered whether incest was at the root of some of that violence. It was a good idea to have a special police unit to handle complaints of domestic violence, but when the victim was a child, extra special care was needed. Child victims, for example, needed to be heard by people who were trained to talk to children about sensitive matters. They also needed psychological support and therapy, since children who had been sexually abused were more likely to abuse children when they themselves were adults.

23. Ms. FONTES LIMA (Cape Verde) said there was a need to put the problems in perspective: Cape Verde was a very poor developing country that had so far been obliged to concentrate on the rights to survival and development. It was only now entering a phase where it could begin to deal with issues such as the protection of individuals. It was true that the cases of violence and sexual abuse identified were only the tip of the iceberg and there was no doubt that living conditions, which forced families to sleep together in the same room, encouraged

promiscuity, and that children were frightened to speak out about things like violence and incest. No structural measures were yet in place but the Government had taken the first step in identifying the problems and was determined to break down the taboos and wall of silence surrounding those subjects. Thanks in part to programmes on the public television station, people were beginning to realize the scope and nature of the problem of violence against children.

24. One of the greatest challenges facing the Government was to safeguard children's right to protection from all kinds of abuse. It was therefore taking steps to ensure that existing legislation was actually applied, and not ignored as was sometimes the case. For that purpose, it had recently appointed a deputy attorney-general with special responsibility for social matters, including the problems facing minors. The next step would be to train judges to specialize in particular areas of the law where urgent action was needed, but that too had to be seen in perspective: Cape Verde had only recently managed to appoint judges to all 17 of the courts in the country.

25. The CHAIRPERSON invited members of the Committee to comment on or ask questions about basic health and welfare, education, leisure and cultural activities and special protection measures.

26. Ms. OUEDRAOGO, noting that Cape Verde had a high emigration rate, asked whether the Government had considered becoming a party to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which was a particularly useful instrument for, among other things, protecting children's right to maintenance. She asked what, if anything, the Government had done about the problem of placing orphans with large families mentioned in paragraph 119 of the report and said she would appreciate more information on what kind of follow-up was carried out in cases of adoption. Noting that Cape Verde was not a party to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, she asked what the situation was regarding international adoptions.

27. As far as health matters were concerned, she said that, although the country's indicators were relatively good for the subregion, there were problems with drinking-water supplies, sanitation and malnutrition, and she would welcome information on any government initiatives in those areas. The situation with regard to breastfeeding was unclear: she would like to know, in particular, whether Cape Verde had adopted the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes. She accepted that AIDS was not a very big problem in Cape Verde, but the Government should still be doing something to prevent it from becoming one. In that regard, she would like to know if there were any AIDS orphans in the country. There was a high prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases among teenagers, and even younger children who had been sexually abused had been infected; she would like to know what measures the Government was taking to tackle that problem. The teenage pregnancy rate was also high, despite the availability of contraceptives: did that indicate a lack of sex education? She believed a dedicated counselling service for young people would encourage them to seek advice more readily. She would welcome some information on young people's use of tobacco and alcohol and on the suicide rate among young people.

28. Ms. AL-THANI said that Cape Verde's health indicators were impressive, and the Government should be commended for lowering the infant mortality rate and raising life expectancy. She would like to know the status of plans for a new hospital in the capital and would like to have more information on the Government's health strategy in general. She assumed, on the basis of the health indicators, that health services were free and easily accessible, but would like to know whether there were any moves to create a private health-care system and, if so, how people would pay for private medical treatment.

29. The indicators on education were also very impressive on paper, but she would appreciate some indication of the quality of the education provided. She would like to know, for example, how the Government monitored the quality of teaching and the level achieved by students at the end of their education.

30. Mr. CITARELLA said first of all that he would welcome a reply to the question about voluntary enlistment in the armed forces. According to the report, a minor had to be at least 17 years old to perform military service as a volunteer, whereas it was compulsory for all men aged between 18 and 35. Had the situation changed? Second, although minors under age 18 were not authorized to marry, it seemed that those under 16 were allowed to do so in exceptional circumstances, with the permission of a court. He failed to understand what happened to minors who wished to marry between the ages of 16 and 18. Third, there was some discrepancy in the fact that education was compulsory until age 16, yet the minimum age for an employment contract was 14. The rules that applied to children between those ages should be clarified. Fourth, paragraph 60 of the report outlined the measures of protection, assistance and education that could be applied to minors under age 16 who committed any act characterized by law as a crime or an offence. Some of the measures were severe, yet an administrative body rather than a judge seemed to be responsible for making the decisions. He asked whether such decisions were made in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Finally, were any measures being taken to ensure that children were separated from adults in detention centres?

31. Ms. KARP said that the State party should clarify what was meant by the term "arrest" listed among the measures in paragraph 60 of the periodic report. She was concerned that in practice, the measures had not always been applied because the necessary infrastructure was lacking. Further information was required about the steps that were taken if a minor under age 16 committed a serious crime. According to the report, children under age 18 could not be sentenced to more than eight years' imprisonment. Were there any alternative measures for punishing children between the ages of 16 and 18, such as community service, parole or rehabilitation institutions? Efforts were clearly being made to address the issue of street children, but in order for measures to be more effective, a study should be carried out into why children ended up living on the streets. It would be useful to know whether Cape Verde had taken advantage of any of the technical assistance that had been offered, particularly in the fields of violence and street children, because street children were often the product of a violent home. Finally, she failed to understand why more children did not enrol in secondary school. Additional details should be provided about the measures that had been envisaged to address the issue.

32. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ requested further information about the benefits of the social security system. It was unclear whether the system was private or State-run and how contributions were made. Paragraph 145 of the periodic report stated that all employees were entitled to a family allowance, which was paid for each child under age 14 up to a maximum of four children per family, suggesting that the Government had a policy to discourage people from having more than four children. Could she assume that the nursing allowance was also paid for a maximum of four infants per family? The Government had stated that urgent measures would be taken to review social security legislation to make it more favourable to disabled minors who lived with their families, which was a welcome development. Finally, additional information would be useful about the role played by the Cape Verdean Juvenile Institute (ICM) in providing social welfare payments, as she understood that its mandate had been transferred to local governments.

33. Ms. CHUTIKUL asked whether Cape Verde's tourism industry had an impact on children. There was no penal provision specifically on the sale and trafficking of minors, although, according to the report, the Government was in the final stages of preparing and discussing the draft of a new Penal Code. Could the State party indicate what progress had been made in that respect?

34. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether child labour was considered to be a problem in Cape Verde. If so, how was it being addressed? The State party should indicate the situation of children working in the informal sector, including in agriculture, as well as the situation of street children.

35. Ms. OEUDRAOGO said that she had heard reports that mothers frequently left their children at home alone or in the care of older siblings when they went out to work. A pre-school system should be set up so that mothers could leave their children under appropriate supervision. With regard to the low enrolment rate at secondary schools, it would be interesting to know what happened to those children who did not enrol. It would also be useful to receive information about teaching methods. Were children involved in decision-making at schools? Were there any provisions to help children with learning difficulties? On the issue of child labour, the report stated that from age 14, a minor could enter into an employment contract, but any contract could be invalidated at the request of the parents or legal representatives. Given the poor socio-economic situation of the country, it seemed unlikely that parents would complain if their child was generating an extra income, even if the work was detrimental to the well-being of the child. It was perhaps necessary to review the legislation on that matter.

36. Paragraph 193 of the report stated that the sexual abuse of girls was more severely punished than that of boys, and the fact that the Government planned to rectify the situation in the new Penal Code was a welcome development. She urged the State party to conduct an in-depth study into the sexual abuse of children and to draw up a plan of action to address the issue.

37. Given its geographical location and economic situation, Cape Verde was not sought after by refugees as a host country; nevertheless, the Government should ratify the Convention on the Status of Refugees so that the State party would be ready to receive refugees if the situation changed. Although Article 36 of the Constitution guaranteed the right of asylum for stateless

persons, ratification of the Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons would also be a welcome development. Finally, she asked whether the education system in Cape Verde included classes on environmental protection, given that the country suffered from problems of desertification and drought.

The meeting was suspended at 4.50 p.m. and resumed at 5.05 p.m.

38. Ms. FONTES LIMA (Cape Verde), replying to a question by Mr. Citarella about paragraph 56 of the periodic report, said that confusion had arisen about the minimum age for marriage because of a translation error. The minimum age for marriage was 18; however, the courts could authorize a minor over age 16 to marry, based on a substantiated request by the parents or legal representative. On the issue of education, schooling was compulsory between ages 6 and 12. Children were sometimes obliged, however, to attend school until age 15 or 16 if certain classes had to be repeated. Recruitment into the armed forces was compulsory for males from age 18 but she was unable to provide any further information on that issue.

39. It was true that Cape Verde had not signed the Convention on the Status of Refugees, but it had acceded to several multilateral agreements such as the Convention on the Recovery Abroad of Maintenance, and would join the International Organization for Migration in 2001. It was true that the sanitary system and drinking water supply were in a critical state, but the Government had taken initiatives with the cooperation of the World Bank to improve the situation. Efforts were also being made to address the problem of malnutrition, which affected 30 per cent of the country's children, and to raise awareness about breastfeeding. A national commission had recently been created with the assistance of the World Bank to coordinate activities to prevent HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. Sex education was a problem in Cape Verde; although information was widely available and special classes were provided at secondary school, teachers often found it difficult to teach the subject and traditional attitudes still prevailed. The Government was making efforts to address the issue, even though it faced resistance from the church, which argued that sex education promoted promiscuity. With regard to the consumption of alcohol, a law had been introduced in 1997 to prohibit the sale, offer, supply and consumption of alcoholic beverages to minors under age 18. The Government was in the process of evaluating the impact of the law, which was still in an early stage, and efforts were being made to implement permanent monitoring measures.

40. On the issue of children in conflict with the law, she acknowledged that there were problems with the system because of the lack of existing structure. Children over age 16 should serve their sentence in a youth prison or in a rehabilitation centre, but in practical terms, they were sent to adult prisons. However, a reform of the prisons was being carried out and greater attempts were being made to separate minors from adults in prisons and to reintegrate young offenders into society. A programme was currently under way funded by Luxembourg to treat young drug addicts in prisons. Efforts were being made with the ICM to restore centres for petty offenders and to create an institution for children who committed more serious crimes. Replying to a question by Ms. Karp about the fact that according to paragraph 60 of the report, a minor under age 16 could be subject to arrest, she said that there was a problem with the English translation. Minors under age 16 could be reprimanded for their acts but not sent to prison.

41. Social security was provided for in both the public and private sectors; family allowance was paid for each child up to a maximum of four children per family. However, the State system was in need of a complete overhaul. Access to mother-and-child health care was free of charge, as was primary education, with books provided by the State, however, secondary education was fee-paying. The Government was currently focusing its efforts on improving the quality of basic education and training teachers, but additional funds had to be earmarked to ensure greater accessibility to secondary education. The State party had had no cases of trafficking in children, to date, but recognized the need to provide for the protection of children, particularly vulnerable ones such as street children, for which it would require technical assistance.

42. Turning to the question of refugees, she said that Cape Verde was a signatory to both the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. Paedophilia was not specifically mentioned in the Penal Code but the Convention could be invoked in accordance with the 1992 Constitution.

43. Ms. RAMOS (Cape Verde), referring to follow-up of adoptions, explained that the State party followed the guidelines laid down in the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption but that measures in that regard were not implemented systematically. Children who were adopted by families in Sweden were able to be monitored closely as letters written by the children themselves as well as pictures and reports were sent regularly by the adoptive parents to the State party; however, follow-up was not as easy for adoptions that took place in other countries. Adoptions that took place within the State party were understandably easier to monitor.

44. At the end of their secondary studies, many Cape Verdean students went on to higher education at foreign universities with reported success. The authorities worked in close cooperation with the national teacher's college, as well as the ICM, to train teachers in children's rights; a report was currently being prepared in that regard. It was true that violence and abuse in the home could explain why some children lived on the streets but a study was being carried out on the subject based on information collected locally and in Brazil; she was confident that it would clarify the situation.

45. Efforts were being made to raise public awareness of the problem of child labour, but it should be pointed out that cases of children working were restricted to work in the family or small jobs, such as selling newspapers or washing cars, which did not really endanger the child. However, the State party was conscious that such situations might not be acceptable to the international community; it nonetheless followed the recommendations laid down in the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) and the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) to avoid serious problems of child labour. Out-of-school youth who had not completed secondary education could benefit from vocational training offered by the Institute for Training and Employment; however, many young people attended private secondary schools. Children were educated about the need to preserve the environment, especially at the primary school level.

46. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether the State party had considered increasing the minimum age of employment from 14 to 16, considering that education was supposed to be compulsory up to age 16.

47. Ms. FONTES LIMA (Cape Verde) said that it was very rare for children still to be in primary school at the age of 15 or 16 unless they had repeated a year or two, and the repeat rate was very low. However, she would raise the issue with the Minister of Education.

48. The CHAIRPERSON asked how the health care and social security benefit system was organized, whether it was premium-based or covered by the State and whether unemployment benefits existed.

49. Ms. FONTES LIMA (Cape Verde) explained that social security contributions were deducted from salaries in the private sector and Government-subsidized in the public sector; however, the Government would be reviewing that regime as it was not financially sustainable. Health care had been free in the first few years following independence, and mother-and-child care had been subsidized by a partner country. Payment for health services, according to the patient's ability to pay, had been gradually introduced since the end of the 1980s, but private health schemes also existed for those who could afford them.

50. Ms. KARP asked whether grants were awarded to deserving students to pursue secondary school studies.

51. Ms. RAMOS (Cape Verde) said that needy students were offered financial assistance, including housing close to secondary schools, which tended to be located further away from communities than primary schools; transportation subsidies were also granted to cushion the high costs in that area and allowances were provided for student housing.

52. Ms. FONTES LIMA (Cape Verde) said that the Government tried not to allow promising students to be deprived of schooling because of financial constraints; in that connection, hot meals were served to needy students. The question whether to set up a university in the country had been the subject of a lengthy debate and would be carefully researched. The State party was aware that qualified persons might migrate to seek more promising opportunities elsewhere, but it was believed that it was better for migrants to be qualified than not.

53. The CHAIRPERSON said he would welcome a reply to Ms. Ouedraogo's question about the fate of the children of working mothers after school; were children just left to roam the streets or did they stay with members of the extended family? Finally, what measures had been established in the education system to cater for the needs of disabled children?

54. Ms. FONTES LIMA (Cape Verde) said there had been some discussions about introducing facilities for children of up to three years; although mothers could depend on a great deal of solidarity from relatives, it did not adequately cover their needs.

55. Ms. RAMOS (Cape Verde) said that there were crèches where fees were small and charged in accordance with the mother's income.

56. Ms. OUEDRAOGO, providing preliminary concluding observations, thanked the delegation for its fruitful dialogue with the Committee. The Committee recommended that the State party should harmonize its legislation; strengthen the Cape Verdean Juvenile Institute in terms of human and financial resources and improvement of programmes and coordinate child-related activities so as to have an integrated perspective of the Convention. The Committee was concerned that there was no ombudsman for children's rights; perhaps a focal point could be introduced within the human rights body recently created. Data collection and the dissemination of the Convention required improvement as well as children's participation in matters concerning them. The State party should endeavour to strengthen cooperation with NGOs and provide training for those who worked with children. Further attention should be given to health issues such as safe drinking water and sanitation, which were elementary to good health. Disabled children also required special attention, in particular those who were seriously disabled. Greater effort should be made to improve access to secondary education. The Committee particularly urged the State party to continue to combat the serious problems of violence and sexual abuse and to focus attention on families. It was commendable that some follow-up of adoptions took place but the State party should ratify the relevant conventions. Because of the country's socio-economic difficulties, the Committee feared a worsening of the street children's situation and therefore suggested that the State party should tackle the problem in cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO). Finally, the Committee had taken note of the delegation's appeal for technical and financial assistance and the request would be conveyed to the relevant bodies.

57. Ms. FONTES LIMA (Cape Verde) thanked the Committee for its interesting comments and recommendations. She said that the State party would do its best to improve the form and content of the next report and reiterated its need for assistance in order to carry out the various programmes and commitments it had undertaken. In conclusion, she said that Cape Verde sincerely wished to place children at the centre of the country's development.

58. The CHAIRPERSON encouraged the State party to support the amendment to article 43 of the Convention to increase the Committee's membership from 10 to 18.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.